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FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO WASHINGTON

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EMERGENCY
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Addressed to Washington telegram No. 3591 of May 14,

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Your telegram No. 1359 [of May 12: Laos]

Please tell Mr. Rusk that I am most grateful to him for having arranged that Mr. Harriman should inform you on Friday night of the President's thinking and also for telling us so promptly about the decision to send United States troops into Thailand. This move should make it clear to the Russians and Chinese that attempts to push forward Pathet Lao forces are dangerous and will if necessary be resisted, and it will also forestall any immediate demand for a SEATO intervention in Laos. At the same time the American statements show that the West is still prepared to reach a negotiated settlement along the lines laid down at Geneva. I agree that the immediate aim of our policy must be to continue to press for a diplomatic solution.

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2. The essential step to achieve this is a meeting of the three Princes. We seem to be fairly close to some arrangement between Souvanna Phouma and Phoumi; unfortunately I learn that the latter has now gone to Taiwan for several days. Please ask the Americans if they will be able to tackle him there so as to get agreement on the time and place of the next meeting of Princes as soon as possible.

3. Meanwhile there is still some scope perhaps for the Co-Chairmen to take action and I could make a further attempt to get Gromyko to exercise restraint over the Pathet Lao. It seems clear from our previous exchanges, however, that he will not undertake, either publicly, or privately to me, to take such action, but I agree with Sir Frank Roberts (Moscow telegram No. 834) that he may be disposed to be helpful behind the scenes. I doubt, however, if a message from me will have much effect unless I can show that Phoumi has now accepted conditions for the next tripartite meeting.

4. If these efforts fail, we shall have to consider whether there would be advantage in reawakening the Geneva Conference. It might provide a means of exercising some restraint over the North Vietnamese and Chinese. On the other hand, since a Conference is in being there would clearly be a strong public demand that it should be given a chance to tackle the situation before there is any question of intervention, either in response to a SEATO appeal or otherwise.

Please see my immediately following telegram.

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